

Tutwiler (H.)

EARLY YEARS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

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ADDRESS

OF

H. TUTWILER, A. M., LL. D.,  
OF ALABAMA,

BEFORE THE

ALUMNI SOCIETY

OF THE

University of Virginia,

THURSDAY, JUNE 29TH, 1882.

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"Moresa morum retentio res turbulencia est aequae ac raritas."---BACON.

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FELLOW-MEMBERS OF THE ALUMNI SOCIETY,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

It is now fifty-seven years since I came here as a student, and fifty-two since I left. Five years seem but a small portion of a long lifetime, yet these five years have become part and parcel of my entire being. Pleasant and profitable in themselves, they have left their impress upon the whole of my after life. Half a century has not been able to efface the precious memories of those years. If "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," I ought not to lack words on this occasion, but there are feelings "too big for words," and then silence is more expressive.

I am here to-day, by your invitation, to lay my humble gift upon the altar of my dear *alma mater*. Would that it were more worthy of the place and the occasion; but it comes from the heart, and "it is the altar that sanctifies the gift."

When I reflect that I am to follow a Hunter, a Stuart, a Tucker, a Preston, and so many others distinguished for wisdom and eloquence, I scarcely know what to say. Your worthy Secretary comes to my aid. In his letter informing me of my election to this honor, he says: "I feel that it will do us all good to be carried back to the historic days of our *alma mater*, when Mr. JEFFERSON was a living presence among us, and when the high scholastic attainments and lofty erudition of the first professors began the new creation of Virginia's high culture." I thank my friend for this suggestion. It accords with my own feelings, and I know that you will all bear with me while I briefly recall some reminiscences of that early period.

And first, like the Roman Emperor, I ought to thank God for directing my youthful steps to this seat of learning. My

thanks are next due to its illustrious founder for providing us such teachers as we then had: a LONG in Ancient Languages, a KEY in Mathematics, a BLÆTTERMAN in Modern Languages, a BONNYCASTLE in Natural Philosophy and Astronomy, a TUCKER in Mental and Moral Philosophy and Political Economy, a LOMAX in Law, an EMMET in Chemistry, and a DUNGLISON in Medicine. These are all too well known to need any eulogium from me. They were selected by Mr. JEFFERSON, and five of them from England, thus showing the absurdity of the charge so often made against him of hostility to that country. When, in 1828, Mr. LONG and Mr. KEY were recalled to England, to take professorships in the new London University, Mr. BONNYCASTLE was transferred to the department of Mathematics, and the vacant places were ably filled by the appointment of GESSNER HARRISON, then a student in the University, to the chair of Ancient Languages, and ROBERT M. PATTERSON, of Philadelphia, to that of Natural Philosophy and Astronomy. It was my privilege to attend the lectures of all these Professors, except those of Dr. DUNGLISON and Dr. HARRISON, (in whose department I was graduated before Mr. LONG left,) and to enjoy the friendship and share the generous hospitality of them and their families; during my five years' residence at the University. To them all, I am under many obligations, but I must be permitted to speak more particularly of one, the friend and companion of my boyhood. We learned to know and to love each other from our earliest years. Here we occupied the same room, and were class-mates in every study but one. Need I mention the name of GESSNER HARRISON?

"None knew him but to love,  
None named him but to praise."

Though cut off in the prime of life, his work survives, and he has left behind him noble representatives.

Foreign universities may boast of *Royal* founders—their Alfred and Elizabeth, their Henrys and Jameses—but we claim one who derives his title, not from accident or birth, but from his own inherent greatness.

When MR. JEFFERSON was about to close his eyes to all earthly scenes, he asked, as is well known, to be remembered for only three things: *Author of the Declaration of Indepen-*



dence, of the Act establishing Religious Freedom, and last, but not least, *Father of the University of Virginia*. He well knew that, without education, political and religious freedom would have no firm basis upon which to rest. So fully impressed was he with this conviction that he began his efforts to establish a system of general education in Virginia as early as 1779; but he was too far in advance of public opinion, and his plan was on too large a scale to be adopted by the legislature at that time. He had filled, with credit to himself and benefit to his country, every office in the gift of the people, from a Justice of the Peace in his own county, to that of President of the United States. He had been a member of the Colonial and State legislatures, of the old Congress before and after the war; associated with PENDLETON and WYTHE in revising and codifying the laws of Virginia and adapting them to the new state of things; Governor of his native State; Minister Plenipotentiary to one of the oldest and most polished courts of Europe; called by the "Father of his Country" to the highest place in his cabinet under the new government, then associated with him as Vice-President, and lastly, elected President for two successive terms. Besides all these, President of the American Philosophical Society, and honored with the friendship and esteem of all the learned and scientific men of his day, at home and abroad. On none of these does he rest his claim to the remembrance of posterity. None are to be placed upon his tomb.

Threescore years spent in the service of his country, almost without intermission, had entitled him to rest, and most men would have been satisfied with what they had done. Not so Mr. JEFFERSON; he felt that he had another duty to perform, the highest of all; and although he had passed the allotted period of man's life, he entered upon this work with all the ardor of youth, sparing neither time, labor, nor expense, with no hope of remuneration; on the other hand, with the certainty of incurring the enmity and ill-will of many. He worked by faith, and not by sight, looking forward for his reward to the gratitude of those who were to reap the benefit of these sacrifices. It is this which entitles him to our love and admiration, and these are enhanced when we consider the

difficulties he had to surmount, and the patience and perseverance with which he overcame them. He had, it is true, some noble coadjutors, and among them we must not omit the name of his "fidus Achates," JOSEPH C. CABELL, who well deserves a monument in this University.

It is almost impossible at this day to form an adequate idea of the obstacles he had to overcome. One of the greatest and most serious was the opposition of a large and respectable portion of the religious community. It is well known that during his administration of the General Government party feeling was most intense and bitter. Each party resorted to the usual and most effective method of giving bad names to the opposite party and its leaders. Thus Mr. JEFFERSON was called a skeptic, an infidel, an atheist. These names had not been forgotten. When it was known, therefore, that he was about to establish an institution of learning, without a clergyman at its head, with no provision for religious instruction and for enforcing attendance on religious exercises, these charges were revived. Many good people sincerely believed that he was about to establish a school for the purpose of promulgating infidelity. They argued thus: they do not teach religion, therefore they teach no religion, therefore they teach infidelity. It was a simple argument, whatever may be said of its logic. An instance of the intensity of this feeling is with in my own knowledge. A most excellent clergyman said to a gentleman who was about to send his son here: "Much as I love your son" (he had been a favorite pupil) "I would, this day, rather follow him to his grave than see him enter the University."

But these fears were soon found to be groundless; and now the University has no abler and more zealous friends and supporters than are to be found in all the Christian denominations, and her alumni are filling with zeal and ability the pulpits of Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist and other churches. It is now well known that in selecting the first Faculty, which was done by Mr. JEFFERSON, no enquiry was made as to their religious beliefs, and if any of them were not believers in the Christian religion, it was certainly not known to the students. Mr. JEFFERSON himself felt and



acknowledged that there was a chasm in this separation of secular and religious instruction, but how to fill it, or how to bridge it, without producing more serious evils, was the difficulty. The University was a State institution. The State had no established Church, and could give no preference to the creed of any religious sect. The plan suggested by himself, and for carrying out which provision has been made in the enactments of the Board of Visitors, has heretofore been deemed impracticable, but it may ultimately be found to have in it the best solution to this vexed question in education. We have, says Lord Bacon, "the book of God's word" and "the book of God's works." These two books, being from the same Author, must contain the same great truths. Why, then, may they not be taught, side by side, by separate Faculties, each devoted to its own field; thus securing the benefit arising from the division of labor, and placing each denomination on an equal footing in the enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of the University? But perhaps, after all, the best solution has been reached already in the present system which seems to have grown up under the leadings of Providence, and which has been attended with such happy results. It is based, too, upon the *voluntary* system which Mr. JEFFERSON deemed so important in secular education. In no institution can we find an abler and more zealous set of chaplains than have, from time to time, officiated in the chapel of this University.

Next to the erection of the buildings, and the selection of the Faculty, the Library engaged the attention of Mr. JEFFERSON. There is one volume in it which has always been full of interest to me. It is a small manuscript volume in his own handwriting, containing a classified list of all the books in the Library, with their size, cost and place of publication. These books were all selected by himself, and purchased, most of them, in Europe under his own supervision. To his life-long and bosom friend, Mr. MADISON, he applied to fill out the catalogue of the theological department. He knew that Mr. MADISON had devoted much time and attention to the study of this subject, and there was perhaps no other man in the State who could have furnished such a catalogue. "It will ever remain," says his

biographer, Mr. RIVES, "a memorial alike of his learning and of his just appreciation of this great province of human reason and faith."

I well remember the first time I saw Mr. JEFFERSON. It was in 1825, in the Proctor's office, whither I had gone with some students on business. A tall, venerable gentleman, in plain but neat attire, entered the room and, bowing to the students, took his seat quietly in one corner. One of my friends privately, gave me to understand that it was Mr. JEFFERSON. I had come from a part of Virginia where he was very popular, and which he used to call his tenth legion, and his name was associated with my earliest recollections. I was struck by his plain appearance, and simple, unassuming manners. When Mr. BROCKENBROUGH was done with the students, he looked up and recognized Mr. JEFFERSON, who then came forward to greet him. We used to see him afterwards as he passed our room on the Eastern Range in his almost daily visits to the University. He was now in his eighty-third year, and this ride of eight or ten miles on horseback over a rough mountain-road shows the deep interest with which he watched over this *child of his old age*, and why he preferred the more endearing title of *Father* to that of *Founder*. This is also shown in the frequent intercourse which he kept up with the Faculty and students. Two or three times a week the former, often with their families, dined with him, by invitation, and once a week he had the students. He had a list of these, and through one of his grandsons, then a student in the University, four or five were invited to dine with him on the Sunday following. This day was selected because it did not interfere with the regular lectures. When he found that some of the students declined the invitation from religious convictions, he ascertained how many there were of this class, and invited them on a week-day.

An account of one of these days by one who had the honor of enjoying this privilege may not be without interest. Mr. JEFFERSON had a wonderful tact in interesting his youthful visitors, and making even the most diffident feel at ease in his company. He knew from what county each student came, and being well-acquainted with the most prominent men

in every part of the State, he would draw out the student by asking questions concerning them, or about something remarkable in his neighborhood, thus making one feel that he was giving instead of receiving information; or he would ask about the studies of the students, and make remarks about them or the Professors, for all of whom he had a high admiration. He was thus careful to pay attention to each individual student. He sat with us at dinner, where Mrs. RANDOLPH presided, and related anecdotes of distinguished persons whom he knew abroad. I remember one particularly of Madame de Staël, whose acquaintance he formed in Paris, and whose talents and writings he greatly admired. At table the conversation turned on novels, and Mrs. RANDOLPH spoke of her father's aversion to them. She said that when "Ivanhoe" came out she induced him to read it, with the hope and belief that it would change his opinion. Mr. JEFFERSON smiled and said, yes, he had tried to read it at her urgent request, but he had found it the dulllest and hardest task of the kind he had ever undertaken. One of Mrs. RANDOLPH's remarks excited no little surprise in her youthful guests: it was, that she had found Blackstone as interesting as a novel. After dinner he pointed out to us, among other paintings, one of Washington on horseback, and said that, though not a handsome man, he presented on horseback the most splendid figure he had ever seen. Such is a brief sketch of one day at Monticello, and every day was like it, only frequently on a more enlarged scale. Dr. DUNGLISON once asked Mrs. RANDOLPH what was the largest number of persons for whom she had been called upon, unexpectedly, to prepare accommodations for the night, and she replied fifty! Can we wonder, then, at the pecuniary embarrassments which embittered the last years of Mr. JEFFERSON's life? No one can read his own touching account of it without feelings of sadness, when he felt that this lovely home, the centre of so much domestic happiness for so many years, built and beautified under his own eye, would fall into the hands of strangers, and his loved ones be left without a house to shelter them! This would have been almost literally true, but for the noble generosity of two of the Southern States—SOUTH CAROLINA and LOUISIANA.



It was on Mrs. RANDOLPH and her daughters that all these household cares devolved. She was, besides, the constant companion of her father, and the stay and comfort of his declining years. Well might he say that the parting from her was "the last pang of life." Do not the labors and sacrifices of this noble woman in the interests of the University demand something more than they have yet received? The remembrance of them is rapidly passing away. And now that the nation is at last to erect a monument to Mr. JEFFERSON, ought not the State, or the alumni, or the ladies of Virginia, to place some memorial tablet over her who is buried by his side, and whom John Randolph, that fastidious critic of female character, even after his alienation from her father, pronounced "the sweetest woman in Virginia."

There is one scene connected with Mr. JEFFERSON and the University which ought not to be passed over in silence. The students, or a part of them, had become dissatisfied with some regulations of the Faculty, and this feeling culminated in open resistance to their authority. Some of the worst class, taking advantage of this feeling, as is often the case, were guilty of great excesses, which rendered the Faculty very much dissatisfied, and it was said that they had determined to resign. The Board of Visitors happened to be in session at Monticello, where they were in the habit of meeting during Mr. JEFFERSON'S lifetime. They came in a body to the University. The students were summoned to meet them in one of the lecture-rooms of the Rotunda. The scene is even now before me. At a long table, in the centre of the room, sat the Board of Visitors, most of them men venerable for their age, and distinguished for their great services to the country—JEFFERSON, MADISON, CHAPMAN JOHNSON, JOSEPH C. CABELL, JOHN H. COCKE, and one or two others, with their Secretary, NICHOLAS P. TRIST. Mr. JEFFERSON arose. He began by saying that this was the most painful event of his life, but soon became so much affected that he could not proceed. He then turned to Mr. JOHNSON and said that he must commit to younger hands the task of saying that which he felt himself unable to say. Those who have seen and heard this eminent lawyer will remember his dignified bearing, his bright, intelli-

gent face, and his earnest, persuasive manner. If eloquence is to be estimated by its effects, I have never heard any that surpassed this. His glowing appeals to their honor; the withering scorn with which he denounced the outrages, were irresistible, and when asked to come forward and give in their names, without any apparent concert, there was a simultaneous rush to the table. While Mr. TRIST was taking down the names, one of those concerned in the riot arose, and disclaimed, on the part of himself and his associates, the acts of outrage which had been perpetrated by only a few, and said that no one felt more scorn than they did for the guilty authors. The names were given to the Faculty, each case dealt with according to the nature of the offence, and quiet and good order restored. It is very pleasant to find Mr. JEFFERSON, only a few months after these events, full of the most sanguine hopes of the success of the University. In a letter to Governor GILES, after speaking in the highest terms of the Faculty, and expressing his confident belief that as high an education could then be obtained here as in England, he adds: "A finer set of youths I never saw assembled for instruction. They committed some irregularities at first, until they learned the lawful length of their tether; since which it has never been transgressed in the smallest degree." Mr. LONG, who left the University in 1828, bears testimony to the same effect, after an experience of nearly fifty years in the Universities of England. In a letter which I had the honor of reading to the Alumni in 2875, he says: "I believed, and still believe, that I never had more youths of good ability under me, nor youths more capable of being made good and useful men;" and he adds, "The man who had done so much for the United States was honored for his services, for his talents, and for his grand and simple character. He ought to be revered by all who enjoy the advantages of being reared in his University, and ever remembered as one of the great men whom Virginia has produced." And here it may be asked, why should not the University of Virginia have its *Founder's Day*, as Cornell, Vanderbilt, Vassar, and other colleges and universities now have. True, our founder had no money or lands to bestow; but he gave what was of more value, the labors, bodily and mental, of the last

ten years of his life. All parts of the country would delight to join in such a celebration. They would come, not only from the South, but from the North, the East and the West to do homage to one who, in the beautiful language of Mr. MADISON, "*lives and will live in the memory and gratitude of the wise and good as a luminary of science, as a rotary of liberty, as a model of patriotism, and as a benefactor of the human kind.*"

It is hardly necessary, at this day, to say anything in defence of what is called the *open* or *voluntary* system of studies, introduced by Mr. JEFFERSON into the University. The successful experience of nearly threescore years has amply justified its wisdom. He was no bold and reckless innovator, as many suppose, ready to pull down what is old and venerable and replace it by what is new. He believed with the father of modern philosophy, that a bigoted retention of customs was as turbulent a thing as innovation itself.\* Such he considered to be the adherence to the old curriculum, which requires each student to pursue the same studies regardless of his tastes, means or previous opportunities. He wished to establish a UNIVERSITY, where each one could pursue to its fullest extent, in independent schools, those studies to which he was led by his special tastes and proposed pursuits in life. In obtaining the honors of the University, *time* was to be no element. Nothing but the most thorough scholarship, tested by the most rigid examination. No *honorary* degrees were to be conferred upon students or others. To learn one thing well is one of the most important lessons in education, and this system of graduating in separate schools seems best calculated to secure this result.

It was this same feeling against old customs which led to those political and legislative reforms for which we are indebted chiefly to him; such as the *abolition of entails*, of the *principle of primogeniture*, and the *separation of Church and State*. All these were deemed by many good men as dangerous innovations, but time and experience have justified the wisdom of these also.

Another new feature first introduced by Mr. JEFFERSON into a University was to make the salaries of the Faculty de-

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\* "*Morosa morum retentio, res turbulentia est æque ac varitas.*"



pend, in part, upon the tuition-fees paid by the students. This gives the Professors a personal interest in the success of the University, which is given by no other system.

To Mr. JEFFERSON was assigned the task of preparing a code of laws for the government of the University. It has been thought by many that he erred in placing too much reliance upon the honor of the students, and in expecting them to coöperate with the Faculty in instituting a system of self-government. It is doubtful if this was an error. Much of the success in the discipline of the University—and it certainly has been very great—is due to this reliance by the Faculty upon the honor of the students. It is but recently, as we learn from the newspapers, that the distinguished President of Amherst College has submitted to the students of that institution a proposition to make them judges, under certain limitations, in the matter of discipline. This was precisely the plan of Mr. JEFFERSON as set forth in the first published edition of the laws.

Under the wise oversight of the Board of Visitors, and the zeal and devotion of the Professors, the progress of the University has been onward and upward. Its Faculty of Instruction has been more than doubled. Eight new schools have been added to meet the advancing wants of the age. It is working downwards, as education must always do, and has exercised a most beneficial effect upon all the schools of the State, both primary and secondary. A student can now accomplish in two or three years what formerly required four or five, thus saving time and money. These schools have exerted a reflex action upon the University, enabling it continually to raise its standard. It is beginning, too, to reap the benefit of donations from private sources, at home and abroad, thus showing what a strong hold it has taken upon public confidence. We learn from the last report of the Rector that these donations have amounted, since 1865, to \$440,000, exceeding by \$110,000 the whole amount of annuities paid by the State in that time. These will, no doubt, continue in increasing ratio. Men will feel a becoming pride in having their names associated with an institution founded by JEFFERSON, MADISON, MONROE, and others, distinguished as well for great ser-

vices to their country as for their exalted character, especially when they see what it has done in the first half-century of its existence. In another half-century, the University will probably be the best-endowed institution in the United States. It is therefore a wise economy in the State to do everything in its power to promote its prosperity.

In July, 1830, just fifty-two years ago, I had the honor of standing on a platform similar to this in the Rotunda in front of us. On the same platform sat the Board of Visitors with their venerable Rector, JAMES MADISON, and the Faculty with their Chairman, Dr. DUNGLISON. These have all passed away, most of them full of years, and all of them full of honors. Of the students then before me, how few survive! But they acted well their part on the theatre of life. They were found in the United States Senate, in the House of Representatives, in the State legislatures, on the bench, at the bar, in the pulpit, in the teacher's chair in our colleges, universities and schools, and adorning the walks of private life. And those who still survive, a few of whom I am happy to recognize here to-day, are blessing the country with their wisdom and example. To those who have just received their well-earned honors, and are about to take their departure, I would simply say: Follow the example of those who have gone before, and success awaits you.

And now my task is done. To the Alumni society I tender my sincere thanks for the opportunity they have given me thus publicly to express my obligations to the University and its founders, and to this intelligent audience for their kind attention.

In concluding, may we not adopt the language of our great Founder, in his first Inaugural address, when, after a most prolonged and bitter political contest, he says: "Let us now, fellow-citizens, restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things;" and let us all join, as well for our common country as for our *alma mater*, in the expiring wish of the famous father Paul for his country: ESTO PERPETUA.











